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## ***Women working to expand Iraq's water treatment capacity***

By Norris Jones  
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USACE Construction Representative Toni Graves, Iraqi Engineer Montaha, and USACE Project Engineer Colleen Hickey are working to ensure the new facility expanding Fadiliya's water treatment capacity meets expectations. [USACE Photo by Norris Jones]

**Thi Qar Province, Iraq**—Residents in a southern Iraqi city will soon receive more drinking water thanks to the efforts of three women with remarkable stories.

In Fadiliya, the community of 10,000 people currently receives only 60 percent of its water needs from existing infrastructure. A new 200-cubic-meter-per-hour treatment facility is under construction and expected to be complete by the end of the year.

Project Engineer Colleen Hickey and Construction Representative Toni Graves with the Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers are overseeing the construction of the \$748,000 facility located adjacent to the existing water treatment plant there. Engineer Montaha, the Iraqi contractor's senior representative, is in charge of the crew doing the work. She grew up in nearby Muthanna Province and attended Basrah University, majoring in civil engineering.

According to Hickey, this is the largest facility of the 15 water treatment plants she is managing. She has high praise for Engineer Montaha and the quality of construction her workforce is doing.



USACE Project Engineer Colleen Hickey (left) and Construction Representative Toni Graves view construction progress at the new 200-cubic-meter-per-hour facility providing additional water treatment capacity for the community. [USACE Photo by Norris Jones]

"As an engineer, you always look at the angles and lines, and everything there is as it should be," said Hickey. "It's a well-maintained, clean site, and unique in many aspects. For instance, in the landscaping plan, they're putting in a garden area. The storage room for chemicals is tiled in blue ceramic. It's a showpiece site and everything is done well."

Hickey enjoys her job. "I love it. I enjoy going out in the community and seeing what's really going on, how families live, talking with residents. They appreciate our efforts. They see things are getting better."

Working with USACE for 5 1/2 years in both environmental engineering and construction operations, Hickey started in the Chicago District, then Los Angeles, and most recently San Francisco District. She grew up in Chicago and graduated in 2003 from Marquette University where she says about a third of the College of Engineering was made up of women.

Arriving in Iraq this past July, Hickey plans to serve a nine-month tour. She says her family and friends are very supportive. "They may have thought I was a little crazy, but they enjoy hearing what we're doing here and the impact we're making."

Graves, a construction representative with 34 years of government service, deployed to Iraq in December from USACE's Louisville district, Fort Knox Area office. During her 12 years there, she was involved with civil works projects such as flood control, detention basins, state parks, locks and dams.

Regarding her Iraq duty, Graves says, "I think it's wonderful we're able to help some very needy families get access to fundamental necessities. They're always kind and friendly, delighted to see these projects take shape, and grateful for what we're doing."

USACE has helped complete 820 water projects in Iraq, and 85 more are ongoing.



Iraqi crew helps construct additional capacity at Fadiliya's water treatment plant. [USACE Photo by Norris Jones]

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